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Serving where the need is

Stuttgart-Area Red Cross staffers deploy in support of troops downrange

By Melanie Casey

Most of us know the American Red Cross as an agency to turn to in times of disaster.

But for the military, the Red Cross serves an additional purpose: It provides the conduit for emergency communication between deployed military members and their families.

As thousands of U.S. service members have been sent to war-torn countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan and Kosovo, a number of Stuttgart-Area Red Cross civilians have deployed alongside them to continue this valuable service.

Local connection

Stuttgart-Area Red Cross employee Chad Magnuson, along with three other members of his team, has been living and working with troops in Baghdad, Iraq, since last August. He expects to return this spring.

The team works 14 to 15 hours a day, 7 days a week.

"We really have no social life to speak of," he said, but "Red Cross messages are often the only communication that soldiers may have with their families, so we need to take them seriously."

Along with the primary mission of delivering and attempting to confirm about 750 messages per week to 70,000 service members in an 800 square mile region, Magnuson's team helps with casualty assistance and provides notifications to next of kin stationed in the area.

He and other Red Cross employees also provide disaster assistance and distribute quality-of-life items to Soldiers.

Magnuson said one of the most difficult things to get used to while deployed is life in a combat zone.

"The sounds of war are all around you," he said. "After each attack, you look at yourself and your teammates and make sure you are all still in one piece and continue working."



courtesy American Red Cross

(Clockwise from left) Lt. Col. Vladimir Hrominkov, Stuttgart Area Red Cross Station Manager Kathleen Butler, Ramstein Assistant Station Manager Joshua Karnes and Station Manager Sally Delaney visit the Russian sector of Kosovo.

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Community comes together in prayer

The Stuttgart area's 16th annual prayer breakfast draws an early-morning crowd to Patch Barracks for faith and fellowship.



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PHS students hit the gym – for credit

Patch High School partners with a variety of area agencies and organizations to promote student fitness.

